

N^o 23

A

SERMON

Preached to the

SOCIETIES

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

St. Mary-le-Bow,

O N

Wednesday *January* the 8th, 1728.

By *JOHN HEYLYN*, D. D.

Rector of *St. Mary Le-Strand*.

L O N D O N,

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Rom. xiii. 4.

He is the Minister of God to thee for Good : but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the Sword in vain : for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth evil. .



INCONSISTENCY is the most palpable mark of Folly. Uniform Error may be more pernicious, but Inconsistency, *i. e.* the maintaining an Error together with the Truths that refute it, is more absurd, and more notorious. And this evidently is the case of those, who approving the Laws now in force against Vice and Profaneness, at the same time

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blame those who promote their Execution, only for that reason, because they endeavour to promote their Execution. Such Censurers are plainly inconsistent: They contradict themselves: They allow, and disallow the same thing: They need no reply, and give occasion only to admire, or pity their Weakness.

IN Reason then Censure and Reproach cannot reach the generous and pious Design which you, Gentlemen, are engaged in, but they must at the same time impeach the Laws: and therefore to justify the Laws, will be your sufficient Apology. If the Laws are evil, then those who are active to promote the Observation of them, share in the Guilt: but if the Laws are good, then they participate of the Merit with the Legislature.

To justify the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality (as to their Intent, I mean) may seem very needless; but the Absurdity of your Adversaries makes it necessary. To prove the Justice and the Expediency of such Laws is indeed a very easy Work; yet nothing more is requisite to shew the Goodness of the Cause, which you are engaged in; and to animate your Zeal for the farther Prosecution of it. To this End I shall endeavour to shew,

First, THAT the Magistrate has Power to make Laws for the Good of Society ;
And,

Secondly, THAT the Laws in Question are of that Kind, *viz.* for the Good of Society.

AND *First*, Of the Power of the Magistrate to make Laws. *He is* (saith our Apostle) *the Minister of God to thee for GOOD : but if thou do that which is Evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the Sword in vain : for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.*

GOD alone is the Supream Governour of Men ; but in this World he has partly suspended the Exercise of his Regal Power, till *the appointed Day, when* (as the Scripture speaks) *Deut. xxxii. 41. His Hand shall take hold on Judgment,* and he shall manifest Himself *the Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.*

IN the mean Time, to keep the World in some tolerable Order, he has constituted Men to rule over Men ; he has appointed Magistrates, who are his Ministers, his Servants ; and act by an exprefs Commission from Him.
And

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And he has put the Sword of Justice into their Hands; that they may more immediately enforce the Observation of his Laws, in all Matters, that concern the Peace and Welfare of Society.

He is the Minister of God to thee for Good.
The particular Members of a Community consult each his own private Good. But besides this, there is a Publick Good, a common Interest of the whole; and the Care of that, is the Province of the Magistrate. The several Members of a Society have several Ends, as their Views and Interests are various: The Office of a Governour is to reconcile these, and controul them too, where it shall be needful; so as to render them consistent with each other, and subservient to the Welfare of the whole Body.

Thus is the Magistrate God's Minister: and this is the true Origin of Government, as the holy Scriptures testify. Reason also concurs with irrefragable Evidence to confirm it. The Magistrate has Authority to make Laws for the Publick Good, because the Publick Good requires that such Laws should be made: And the numberless Benefits of Civil Government are so many Arguments to establish its Authority.

As a farther Confirmation therefore, it may not be amiss here briefly to mention them: And the rather, because, as great a Good as Civil Government is; yet, like most other Goods in Possession, it is rarely valued as it deserves. 'Tis certainly the Chief of temporal Blessings, because the Enjoyment of all other temporal Blessings depends upon it: Yet very few (I fear) acknowledge it in their Thanksgivings to GOD, or reflect on it with Gratitude to his Ministers the Magistrates, to whose Protection, under GOD, we owe the secure Fruition of Life it self, as well as of its Comforts and Conveniencies. The Bulk of a Nation, with Regard to their Governours, are in the same State as the Body is to the Soul, unconscious of that by which it subsists. The Genius, which presides to secure their Tranquillity, is to them an invisible Power, whose Benefits they enjoy without due Sentiments of Gratitude.

OUR Apostle therefore thought it necessary that Men should be put in Mind of their own Happiness in being the Subjects of a well regulated Government: To have right Apprehensions of that Happiness, we should consider, what would be our State, if we had no Protection from the Civil Power: For, to the Reproach of our Nature, we seldom know
how

how to value Blessings, but by the Want of them. Suppose therefore that GOD had not made this Provision for our Security, what Disorders, what Rapine, Violence, and unspeakable Miseries of all sorts, would overspread the Face of the Earth? Whosoever duly considers this, must acknowledge, that, under GOD, the Magistracy *upholds* (as the Psalmist speaks) *the Pillars of the Earth*, Psal. lxxv. 3. and saves the World from Desolation.

WERE there no Government, we should indeed have Liberty to do what we pleas'd: but withal, we should be expos'd to suffer as much as it should please any other, who should be stronger than our selves; *Strength* then would be *the Law of Justice*, (as the Wise-man elegantly expresses it) *Strength* would be *the Law of Justice, and that which is feeble found to be nothing worth*, Wis. ii. 11. We could not then call our Fortunes, our Estates, or our Lives, our own; or enjoy them any longer than the Avarice or Malice of our stronger Neighbour would permit. We find that all the Terrors of Government hardly suffice to restrain Men from Injury and Violence. They will steal, and cheat, and oppress, altho' the Sword of Justice be brandish'd before their Eyes; and they see other Male-

factors fall under its Stroke: But doubtless they would be infinitely more rapacious, if they were not deterr'd by the Rigours of Authority.

IN a Word, all our Tranquillity, all the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life; the Rest of the Night, and the Safety of the Day, are the Fruits of Government, the Effects of the Divine Bounty convey'd to us through the Hands, and by the Mediation of our Sovereign. His Navy is our Security at Sea, his Armies are our Defence by Land against Foreign Invasions; while the Terrors of his Civil Justice prevent Domestick Injuries, or the Exercise of it redresseth those we have sustained.

AND thus it appears sufficiently that the Magistrate is *the Minister of God to us for Good*, and consequently has Power to make all such Laws as are found necessary to that End.

BUT before I leave this Head, I would make one farther Use of it, to establish a right Notion of that darling Boast of our Nation, *Liberty*; and shew how it stands distinguish'd from the two Extremes, *Licentiousness* and *Slavery*.

Licentiousness prevails, where due Laws are not provided, or (which is the same in Event) not executed for the Publick Good.

Liberty flourishes, where they are made, and executed only for the Publick Good. And

Slavery oppresses, where the Laws are perverted or suspended, to serve the Interests of the Governours, at the Expence of Publick Good.

Licentiousness has often usurp'd the amiable Name of *Liberty*, and done much Mischief in that Disguise. Of this we have a flagrant Instance in what is called the Liberty of the Press, whereby our Religion and our Government have been scandalously vilified with Impudence and Impunity. Many worthy Persons have done all that can be done in a private Capacity, to remedy this Evil, by publishing the fullest and most satisfactory Confutations of such pestilent Writings. A late, distinguish'd, and truly *Pastoral* Performance, has dissipated the Cavils of Infidelity with Arguments so judicious, and so forcible, that, if Reason were to determine the Controversie, our Religion would need no other Defence. But no Man should be allowed to disperse Poisons,

sons, altho' there were sufficient Antidotes at Hand: And therefore, with due Submission, I cannot but think, that in this Case, the Government should interpose in its own Defence, as well as that of Christianity. For the Laws that should prevent or punish such high Misdemeanours are so defective, that Blasphemy and Treason seem to have been publish'd without Disguise; or at least with such thin Disguises, as rather serve for Ornaments, exciting only the Reader's Curiosity, without concealing any Part of the Author's Malice. The plainest and most intelligible Allusions, with some trivial, perhaps ludicrous Change of Circumstances, serve the Libeller for a Varnish, with which he sets off, and heightens his profane or seditious Arguments: But if he be question'd for them, then this transparent Varnish becomes a Vail, a thick, an impenetrable Vail, which (as some have pretended) our Publick Justice must not see through.

SUCH Absurdities are maintain'd and defended under the glorious Name of *Liberty*. But true Liberty can lend^r them no Defence. In Strictness of Speech indeed, Liberty is a Prerogative peculiar to the Virtuous Man; for he only may do all that he is inclin'd to do. He is free to do what he wills; because

he never wills, but what he ought. Such absolute Liberty is not what we now treat of, but Civil Liberty, or the proper Liberty of the Subject, which is there maintain'd (as I said) not where there are no Laws, but where there are only good ones, *i. e.* such as promote the general Interest of the Subject.

AND the same Character distinguishes it also from *Slavery*; for Freedom and Servitude differ in this, that the Freeman is under no Restraint, but what conduces to his proper Interest: Whereas the Slave is made subservient to that of his Master. Thus the Paternal Authority directs Children for their Good: While the Command of the Master exacts only what is serviceable to himself. Hence good Kings have been deservedly styl'd the Fathers of their Country, because they ruled their Subjects with a Paternal Disinterestedness; while the Tyrannical Prince considers his People as his Property, and accordingly uses them as the Tools of his Ambition or Avarice. How far the Laws of such a Prince bind the Conscience, is a Matter of Controversie foreign to our present Subject, and to our Constitution. We treat here only of Laws that tend to the Publick Good, and from such there is no Exemption. All Men are obliged to obey such Laws, and all
good

good Men will, and as they love their Countrey, must endeavour to promote their Execution.

MY Second Head was to shew, That those Laws in particular, for the Maintenance of which, your Zeal has been exerted, are of this Kind, are for the Publick Good.

IN the most solemn Service of the Church, we pray, That *all that are put in Authority may truly and impartially minister Justice, to the Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and the Maintenance of God's true Religion and Vertue.* The same Words, as I apprehend, express the full Purport and Design of the Societies for Reformation. Your Endeavours tend only to this, that those in Authority may duly minister Justice, to the Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and to the Maintenance of GOD's true Religion and Virtue. As the Prayer is pious, so the Attempt is virtuous; and your Deeds worthily correspond with your Petitions. For what we desire, that we must also endeavour. We are oblig'd (if I may so speak) to practise our Prayers; and not solicit Heaven with vain Desires; but contribute our selves, as much as possible, to their Execution.

FROM this abridg'd Account of your pious Undertaking, we may distinguish the Laws, whose Execution you endeavour to promote, into two Kinds :

First, SUCH as are provided for the Maintenance of GOD's true Religion, and its immediate Consequence, Virtue. And,

Secondly, THOSE which are Enacted for the Punishment of Vice and Wickedness. I would shew that both these are for the Publick Good.

AND *First*, Of the Laws for the Maintenance of GOD's true Religion: For such there are in our Statute-Book; tho' a Stranger, who should come among us, might suspect there was no such Thing: Of these, I say, that they are for the Publick Good. The Publick Good is the Good of all the Particulars; and every Man, that has a Soul to be sav'd, has such an unspeakable Interest in Religion, that all other Goods are trivial, and ought to be held contemptible, in Comparison of it.

As the Magistrate is the *Minister of God*, he is, by that Relation, bound to be zealous for *his Master's Service*; as he is GOD's Minister
to

to the People for their Good, he must promote their principal Good, their Eternal Welfare, with the utmost Extent of his Power. His Power indeed cannot reach the Heart of an Infidel; but it may stop his Mouth, and hinder the Contagion of his Wickedness.

WHEN a Country is visited with Pestilence, the Magistrate exerts a very arbitrary Authority; the Diseased, and even the Whole, who are so unfortunate as to have cohabited with them, are shut up, and made a Sacrifice to the Publick Safety. A Treatment severe indeed, but necessary; we judge it better that some, tho' *innocent*, Persons should suffer, than the whole Community run the Hazard of Infection. And it would be a very unaccountable Tendernefs that should spare the *Guilty*, in a Case, where the Evil is incomparably greater.

IF the Magistrate should, to his and our great Misfortune, be insensible to the spiritual Concerns of the Subjects; yet upon a civil Account, the Preservation of Religion is his Interest, as well as his Duty: And the Politician (if not infatuated, as some have formerly been) the Politician, I say, must in this Respect concur in Councils with the Divine.

THE Government is oblig'd, for its own Sake, to support Religion, because Religion is the best Support of Government. When I speak of the Governments maintaining Religion, I have no Regard to the secular Interest of Clergy-men, but only to that of Piety and Virtue, the only Interest which we *ought* to have at Heart. And I say, it is of the greatest Consequence to the Magistrate, that he maintain and defend these, *viz.* Piety and Virtue, as inforc'd in the System of Christianity, for these are the best Security of his Civil Power. Christianity guards the Throne with the Terrors of Omnipotence. It represents the Supream Magistrate, as GOD's Vicegerent. It arms him with Divine Authority, and exacts Obedience to him upon the Penalty of Damnation. *The Powers that be* (saith our Apostle) *are ordained of God: Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation: Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience-sake: For this Cause pay you Tribute also, for they are God's Ministers, &c.* So serviceable are the Christian Doctrines to the Civil Establishment. But this is so obvious a Truth, and Religion appears so perfectly adapted to the Political

Interest of Government, that one of the most plausible Objections, which the Adversaries of Religion have raised against it, is, that it was an Invention of Policy, an Engine contriv'd by Statesmen, to keep Men in Subjection: And they must have been wretched Politicians, who, negligent of such apparent Advantages, have endeavoured to depreciate it in the Minds of the People. Could it be supposed an Error, yet it would be so wholesome, so beneficial, and so eminently serviceable to Government, that Governours are indispensably oblig'd to encourage and maintain it: But as it is the most important of all Truths, all possible Motives concur to engage the Magistrate to cherish and propagate it with the whole Strefs of his Authority, and to defend it with that Sword, which G O D has put into his Hands.

It may be farther considered, that in the Legal Constitution of these Kingdoms, the Civil Power and the Ecclesiastical have a stricter and more intimate Union than in other Countries. In the Articles of our Church, the Ecclesiastical Supremacy is explain'd to signifie, *Art. 37.* Such Power “ as has been
“ given always to all godly Princes in holy Scrip-
“ ture by G O D himself, *i. e.* that they should
“ rule all Estates and Degrees committed to their
C “ Charge

“ Charge by GOD, whether they be Eccle-
 “ siastical or Temporal; and restrain with the
 “ Civil Sword the Stubborn and Evil-doers.”

The godly Princes here propos'd as worthy Patterns of the Ecclesiastical Supremacy, are *David, Hezekiah, Asa, Josiah*, and others, who severely punish'd the Impugners of the true Religion; and made such Reformation in Church and State, that all we need wish for from the Christian Magistrate, is to follow their Example, as our Law here seems to have given them *their* Authority.

THE Example of these pious Princes extends its Influence to the other Branch of your Care, *viz. the Execution of the Laws against Vice*. It is recorded of them, not only that they destroy'd Idolatry, and maintain'd the true Religion; but also that they exerted their coercive Power against enormous Immoralities. We read particularly of two of them, *viz. Asa and Josiah*, 1 Kings xv. 12. 2 Kings xxiii. 7. that *they brake down the Houses of the Sodomites*, and cleansed the Land from their Abominations. And they were also vigilant to suppress all other disorderly Practices, that might offend, or injure the Community.

IT will be acknowledg'd, that all Kinds, and all Degrees of Vices, do not come under the Cognizance of the Civil Magistrate: But when they break out, and grow notorious, so that the Publick is scandaliz'd, or disturb'd by their Exorbitancy, or may be infected by their Malignity, then it becomes a publick Concern to repress their Insolence; and, as far as possible, to stop their Contagion. Of this Kind are open Lewdness, the Infection of Night-walkers, and the lately so rife Abomination of the unnatural, and detestable Sin, not to be named among Christians. Of this Kind also, are Bestial Drunkenness, execrable Oaths, and dreadful Curses, notorious Profanations of the Lord's-Day, and ruinous Gaming, with its Train of Cheats, Quarrels, and Blasphemies. All these are Publick Nuisances, injurious to the Peace, and pernicious to the Welfare of Society.

AGAINST these you have list'd your selves Champions of the Publick Good, to fight under the Banner of the Civil Magistrate. Assistance like yours is absolutely necessary to him for the due Discharge of his Offices: For Justice might be represented Deaf, as well as Blind, if those should be discourag'd, who give her true Informations.

AND thus much may suffice to shew the Justice and the Expediency of the Laws now in Force, against Profaneness and Immorality; and consequently to justify the Cause which you are engaged in, and to excite your Zeal for the farther maintaining of it. Though indeed your Zeal has been such, as prevents our Incitements, and renders Exhortations superfluous. I should rather congratulate your Success, not only against the great Number of single Transgressors, which appears in your printed Accounts; but against the strong Holds of Iniquity. You have been greatly instrumental in dispersing many Conventicles of Uncleaness; and made the principal Offenders Publick Examples, to the Terror, and greater Restraint at least, of all such wicked Assemblies. You also have been happy Instruments in suppressing and dissipating many Gaming-houses, which were the Haunts of disaffected Persons, Dens of Thieves, and Nurseries of Street-Robbers and Highway-men. And a much greater Progress would have been made in these, and all other Branches of publick Reformation; if you had not met with Obstacles where they should be least expected; a part of which I shall touch upon before I conclude.

WHEN I formerly had the Honour to speak before these Societies, I represented, to the best of my Capacity, the Qualifications requisite for such as enter upon the arduous Work of Reformation; and the Temper or Disposition with which it should be performed: So that I have nothing farther to suggest upon that Head, and indeed little upon any other relating to the present Occasion: Only I would take Notice of the Difficulty I mentioned, which lies in your Way, and has been, as I believe, the Reason why, with all your Efforts, you have not made so great a Progress, as otherwise might have been expected from your Courage and Diligence.

YOU have endeavour'd to promote the Execution of the Laws now in Force against Impiety and Immorality; but has it not been found, by a vexatious Experience, to your great Trouble, and greater Expence, that *some of these Laws* want Reformation? Have they not often prov'd ineffectual by Reason of certain Defects, Intricacies, or Obscurities, through which the Guilty evade, and in which a virtuous Prosecutor may be ensnar'd?

BUT whatever may be defective in our Laws, we are to hope, that the Wisdom of our Legislature will supply: And in the mean time you will continue your usual Endeavours, that the Laws may be exerted, as far as they will reach, to the Punishment of Vice, and the Maintenance of Religion and Virtue. Your Reward will not depend upon your Success, but will be proportioned to the Purity of your Intentions: And tho' the stubborn Iniquity of the World, may in some Measure frustrate your pious Labours here, yet they will be available to your own Sanctification. *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

F I N I S.



